

FREE TICK TESTING FOR RESIDENTS OF BEDFORD AND PARTICIPATING TOWNS

Information for Medical Providers

32 Massachusetts towns including Bedford, Concord, Carlisle, Lincoln and Winchester have been awarded \$111,300 from the Patrick Administration's 2014 Community Innovation Challenge (CIC) grant program. This grant funds the participation of the towns in a Tick-Borne Disease Network (TBDN) established by the Laboratory of Medical Zoology (LMZ) at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The purpose of the CIC-funded project is to gather data on ticks in the 32 partner towns by providing prepaid testing of up to 100 ticks submitted by residents. The TBDN partner communities are Acton, Barnstable, Bedford, Bourne, Brewster, Buckland, Carlisle, Charlemont, Chatham, Concord, Conway, Deerfield, Dennis, Eastham, Falmouth, Gill, Harwich, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Lincoln, Mashpee, Monroe, Nantucket, Orleans, Provincetown, Sandwich, Shelburne, Truro, Wellfleet, Winchester, and Yarmouth. The LMZ conducts the testing and provides analytical services. Thanks to the CIC grant, through spring 2015, the LMZ will test ticks from each partner town free of charge to the residents who send them in using the submittal protocols found at www.TickReport.com. A \$30 subsidized tick testing rate available to residents of towns that are not part of the grant program.

The ticks will be tested for three common pathogens, *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Lyme), *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, and *Babesia microti*, and the results will be provided to residents to share with their medical provider. It is the hope of the TBDN partners that data can help to narrow down a potential tick borne illness diagnosis more quickly.

To date, 1667 ticks have been submitted for analysis as part of this program. A survey of residents who used this service yielded over 600 responses. The overwhelming response was positive. Most (99.2%) found the service useful and easy to use. More than 82% of those respondents indicated that the tick test lead them to change behaviors (eg. use repellents, check for ticks more often, etc.) and 91% shared the TickReport results with their healthcare provider.

Patients and providers are encouraged to visit the TBDN website: www.TickReport.com where they can order a tick test and receive instructions on how to submit the tick for analysis. Additionally, information is available on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tick-Borne-Disease-Network-of-Massachusetts>